

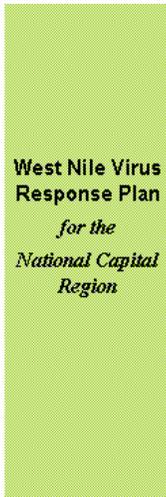
Health Capsules

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

COG Releases Regional West Nile Virus Plan

The COG Health Officials Committee has recently released an updated West Nile Virus (WNV) Response Plan. This plan was developed by the Mosquito-Borne Pathogens Task Force, which is comprised of epidemiologists and specialist from local and state health departments in the COG region.

In 2001, the original COG West Nile Virus Response Plan was written to address the emerging threat of this virus to the region. It outlined risk levels and response activities tied to the identification of West Nile Virus infected mosquitoes, birds and humans. However, by 2003, WNV has become endemic to our region with all jurisdictions reporting locally infected human cases. Therefore, this plan has been created to reflect the current levels of arbovirus surveillance and data tracking, mosquito control, public education and outreach, and communications among the jurisdictions.



The new WNV plan highlights regional surveillance and control measures as well as local and state response plans.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Health Officials Committee



Mosquito-Borne Pathogens Task Force June 2003

Last year, there were 73 cases of the West Nile Virus and 7 deaths in the metropolitan Washington region. West Nile virus is most commonly transmitted through the bite of a mosquito. WNV has been identified in humans, birds, horses, certain reptiles and various domestic and wild mammals.

Although city and county plans for response vary slightly between jurisdictions, health professionals agree that the public plays an essential role in combating and reducing the spread of West Nile Virus by eliminating mosquito breeding sites around private property and by adopting strategies to protect themselves from mosquito bites. Area citizens are encouraged to remove standing water that accumulates on their property and to use insect repellent or long sleeved clothing when outdoors.

West Nile virus is commonly transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito.

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New COG Committee Works to Build Resilience

COG's Human Services Policy committee has recently established the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Committee (SAMH). This new committee will work on regional issues of mental health and substance abuse, addressing both short-term concerns (the effects of terrorism and its threats) and long-term solutions (improving mental wellness and resiliency to changes).

Growing concerns about terrorism, the war in Iraq, and the status of the economy have raised concerns among local health professionals about possible increases in substance abuse and mental health issues.

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Summer 2003

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Special points of interest:

- We've recently redesigned our website! Visit us at www.mwcog.org.
- Want to know what COG has been up to? Contact COG's Information Center at 202-962-3256 to obtain COG's 2001 & 2002 Annual Report.
- 9/11 United Services Group is pleased to announce the launch of The September 11th Assistance Guide (www.sept11help.org) - an online directory of services, programs and agencies that are still available to individuals affected in various ways by the events of September 11th.



The Young Latinos Leadership Council of Bladensburg High School receives their award for promoting alcohol/drug free lifestyles among their peers.

“This year’s student group winners represent the front lines in the fight against underage drinking in Greater Washington”

-Kurt G. Erickson, WRAP President

COG Helps Laud Area Teens for Their Fight Against Underage Drinking

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) joined the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) this spring in recognizing six Greater Washington high school groups fighting underage drinking.

Serving as the official judging body for the 11th competition amongst area high school student groups, COG joined WRAP this April to bestow 2003 GEICO Student Awards upon: Bladensburg High School’s Young Latinos Leadership Council (Prince George’s Co., MD); George Mason High School’s Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Club (Falls Church / Arlington, VA); Georgetown Visitation’s Buddies Against Drinking and Driving (BADD) Club (Washington, D.C.); James

Blake High School’s Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Club (Montgomery County, MD); James Madison High School’s Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Club (Fairfax Co., VA); and Stonewall Jackson High School’s Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Club (Prince William Co., VA).

The GEICO Student Awards, now in their second decade, are presented by WRAP to Washington-metropolitan area high school student groups promoting alcohol and drug-free lifestyles to their peers. The popular awards are presented to just one student group in each of the Greater Washington counties and/or cities served by WRAP.

Student groups were judged based on their leadership, effectiveness, innovation and the ability to involve both the student body and community in their efforts to prevent underage drinking. Activities of the winning groups included a variety of creative initiatives including: developing student-parent “contracts” that require abstaining from alcohol and drug use; organizing alcohol-free teen social events and forums; establishing mentoring relationships between high school and intermediate and elementary school students; and participating in town governing bodies.

Along with a ceremonial plaque, the six winning student groups received \$500

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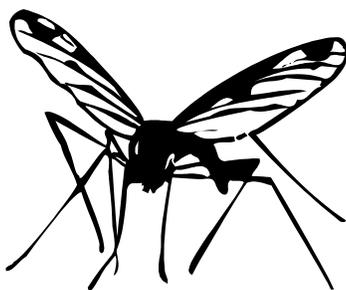
Human illness from West Nile virus is rare, even in areas where the virus has been reported. The chance that any one person is going to become ill from a mosquito bite is low. Although human illness is rarely severe, people with less hardy immune systems, notably the elderly, could develop life threatening illnesses.

Area health professionals are utilizing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to effectively control and reduce the mosquito population in their respective jurisdictions. IPM is an ecologically conscious strategy employed by public health officials to control pests in the environment.

IPM activities may include: public and private property

breeding site reduction; mosquito larval reduction through the use of natural predators; and using adulticide sprays to target mature mosquitoes.

To learn about what your jurisdiction is doing to combat WNV or to view the regional West Nile Virus Response Plan, please visit www.mwcog.org.



The Asian tiger mosquito, which can carry the West Nile Virus and bites during the day, is a growing concern in urban settings.

Corrections Health Officials Address Continuity of Care for HIV Patients

Members of COG's Corrections Health Care Subcommittee have partnered with the American Correctional Association and Roche Pharmaceuticals to establish a regional continuity-of-care program to provide immediate inmate access to Roche's anti-HIV drug, *Fuzeon*, if they are on the treatment already. *Fuzeon* is the first in a new class of anti-HIV medications known as 'fusion inhibitors'. It prevents HIV from fusing with the membrane of CD4 cells.

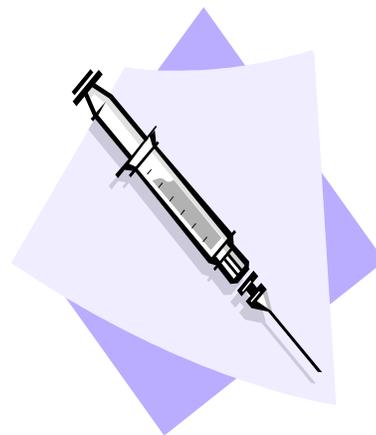
A number of State Medicaid and AIDS Drug Assistance Programs have already

placed *Fuzeon* on their formularies. It is therefore only a matter of time before a patient in the community receiving *Fuzeon* as part of their antiretroviral treatment regimen may enter one of the correctional facilities in the Washington metropolitan region. The regional emergency supply would be used in such a case.

In June, COG hosted a free, interactive hands-on demonstration for area nurses and health services administrators regarding the preparation and administration of *Fuzeon*. An emergency safety supply of *Fuzeon* will be housed in regional cor-

rectional institutions in each jurisdiction (Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia). "This is a unique collaboration between the private sector and a regional corrections system which can serve as a model for the entire country," says Marmie Schuster-Walker, co-chair of COG's Corrections Health Care Subcommittee.

For more information about *Fuzeon*, please visit www.fuzeon.com. For more information on the Corrections Health Care Subcommittee, please call 202-962-3349.



*In March 2003, the Food & Drug Administration approved *Fuzeon*, which must be reconstituted and administered twice daily via subcutaneous injection.*

DEA's Update on Drugs in the Metropolitan Region

The nation's capital and the mid-Atlantic region have been a major thoroughfare for drug trafficking. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), DC's large international population provides insulation for ethnic drug trafficking groups from almost

every major supply country in the world, and the suburbs surrounding the city provide a steady supply of customers.

Cocaine, heroine, and marijuana are commonly abused in this region. Club drugs and methamphetamines are

particularly popular among young adults who frequent raves and nightclubs.

A number of enforcement and intelligence initiatives are in place to reduce the drug trade in the Washington Metropolitan region.

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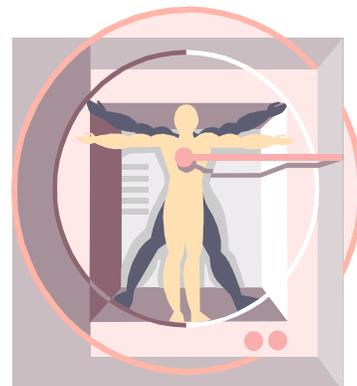
Committee, continued from page 1

A strong infrastructure is essential to coordinate mental wellness and substance abuse treatment and prevention services in our area. It is important to empower Washington area residents to cope with personal emergencies as well as regional incidents.

One of the immediate tasks of the SAMH Committee is to flesh out the Health, Mental Health and Medical Services portion of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan. The committee will also work to reduce mental illness and substance abuse problems in the National Capitol Region by imple-

menting best practices and bolstering the existing mental health and substance abuse infrastructure and providing training to responders and other professionals.

For more information on the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Committee, please call 202-962-3275.



COG's new committee will work to promote resilient and empowered individuals and communities in the Washington area.



Teens, continued from page 2

from GEICO Direct to continue their efforts of keeping their peers on the right track.

“Nearly ten young people die in alcohol-related traffic deaths every day in this country,” said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP’s President. “This year’s student group winners represent the front lines in the fight against underage drinking in Greater Washington and WRAP along with COG commends their efforts in this far from won battle.”

Founded in 1982, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program is an award-winning public-private coalition formed to fight drunk driving, drugged driving and underage drinking in the Washington-metropolitan area. Through public education, innovative health education programs and advocacy, WRAP is credited with keeping the metropolitan Washington area’s alcohol-related traffic deaths consistently lower than the national average. WRAP, however, may best be known to area residents for the organization’s popular free cab ride service for would-be drunk drivers, *SoberRide*.

For more information, visit www.wrap.org.

DEA, continued from page 3

The Washington/Baltimore HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) Program provides resources and helps to develop strategies for regional health threats. The District has a number of drug related enforcement operations in place, such as, the Major Narcotics Branch of the Metropolitan Police Department. The Metropolitan Area Task Force provides funding for enforcement efforts in Northern Virginia in conjunction with the Annandale HIDTA.

To learn more about the DEA’s efforts in your state, please visit www.dea.gov/pubs/state_factsheets.html.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments is the association of 18 local governments working together for a better metropolitan region. COG provides a focus for action and develops sound regional responses to such issues as the environment, affordable housing, economic development, health and family concerns, human services, population growth, public safety and transportation.

To subscribe to *Health Capsules* or to share information on regional health issues, please contact Sandra Adomako-Bempong at 202-962-3275 or sabempong@mwkog.org.



Metropolitan Washington Council
of Governments

777 North Capitol Street, NE
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Phone: 202-962-3200

Fax: 202-962-3204

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